

Philosophy

The Tool of Synthesis

The purpose of revolutionary philosophy is to understand the meaning of freedom, where freedom is the good that contains all other goods. Because freedom is good, it provides us with a measure of what is good and what is not good.

Ours is a freedom struggle, and it is finally on the battlefield of Philosophy that the struggle for freedom is won or lost.

The Fundamental Question of Philosophy is the question of the relationship of consciousness to being, of thought to matter and nature. This means the relationship of Subject to Object, of which the Subject – meaning ourselves, Humanity – is our primary concern and location of value.

Karl Marx

“The head of emancipation is philosophy, its heart the proletariat. Philosophy cannot realize itself without the transcendence of the proletariat, and the proletariat cannot transcend itself without the realization of philosophy.”

Marx and Engels

“In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” (Communist Manifesto, 1948)

Karl Marx

"It is men who change circumstances. Human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice."

"The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth... in practice."

"The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, forgets that it is men who change circumstances"

"The essence of man is the ensemble of the social relations. All social life is essentially practical."

"The standpoint of the old materialism is bourgeois society; the standpoint of the new is human society or social humanity."

"The first premise of all human history is the existence of living human individuals."

"Man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man - state, society."

"It is, therefore, the task of history, once the other-world of truth has vanished, to establish the truth of this world. It is the immediate task of philosophy, which is in the service of history, to unmask self-estrangement in its unholy forms once the holy form of human self-estrangement has been unmasked. Thus, the criticism of Heaven turns into the criticism of Earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics."

"The point is to change the world."

Frederick Engels

"Only that freedom is genuine which contains necessity..."

"Freedom does not consist in any dreamt-of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends."

Paulo Freire

“To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naive and simplistic. It is to admit the impossible: a world without people. This objectivistic position is as ingenuous as that of subjectivism, which postulates people without a world. World and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction. Man does not espouse such a dichotomy; nor does any other critical, realistic thinker. What Marx criticized and scientifically destroyed was not subjectivity, but subjectivism and psychologism.”

Amilcar Cabral

“It is often said that national liberation is based on the right of every people to freely control its own destiny and that the objective of this liberation is national independence. Although we do not disagree with this vague and subjective way of expressing a complex reality, we prefer to be objective, since for us the basis of national liberation, whatever the formulas adopted on the level of international law, is the inalienable right of every people to have its own history, and the objective of national liberation is to regain this right usurped by imperialism, that is to say, to free the process of development of the national productive forces.

“For this reason, in our opinion, any national liberation movement which does not take into consideration this basis and this objective may certainly struggle against imperialism, but will surely not be struggling for national liberation.

“This means that, bearing in mind the essential characteristics of the present world economy, as well as experiences already gained in the field of anti-imperialist struggle, the principal aspect of national liberation struggle is the struggle against neo-colonialism.” Cabral

Helena Sheehan

The act of knowing transformed what was known. It was never possible to detach the thing known from the knowing of it. Caudwell opposed all passivist imagery in describing knowledge. Knowledge was not a matter of copying, mirroring, photographing, reflecting. Although he never remarked on Lenin's use of such imagery in [Lenin's] *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, he had read the book and his rejection of the reflectionist model was quite explicit and polemically expressed. In no uncertain terms, Caudwell made his point:

Christopher Caudwell

"The mirror reflects accurately: it does not know. Each particle in the universe reflects the rest of the universe, but knowledge is only given to human beings as a result of an active and social relation to the rest of reality."

"Implicit in the conception of thinkers like Russell and Forster, that all social relations are restraints on spontaneous liberty, is the assumption that the animal is the only completely free creature. No one constrains the solitary carnivore to do anything. This is of course an ancient fallacy. Rousseau is the famous exponent. Man is born free but is everywhere in chains. Always in the bourgeois mind is this legend of the golden age, of a perfectly good man corrupted by institutions. Unfortunately not only is man not good without institutions, he is not evil either. He is no man at all; he is neither good nor evil; he is an unconscious brute."

"Russell's idea of liberty is the unphilosophical idea of bestiality... The man alone, unconstrained, answerable only to his instincts, is Russell's free man. Thus all man's painful progress from the beasts is held to be useless. All men's work and sweat and revolutions have been away from freedom. If this is true, and if a man believes, as most of us do, as Russell does, that freedom is the essential goal of human effort, then civilisation should be abandoned and we should return to the woods. I am a Communist because I believe in freedom. I criticise Russell, and Wells, and Forster, because I believe they are the champions of unfreedom."

"This good, liberty, contains all good,"

Antonio Gramsci

“Critical self-consciousness means, historically and politically, the construction of an elite of intellectuals. A human mass does not ‘distinguish’ itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organizing itself; and there is no organization without intellectuals, that is without organizers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of ‘specialized’ in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas.”

Ron Press

*“...the standard Marxist idea that society passes in a linear manner from primitive communism via class struggle to the ultimate victory when the working class replaces capitalism with a classless society is **an unattainable myth**. Especially when a classless society was taken to mean the establishment of order and stability, in fact stasis. The [chaos] theories indicate that stasis means the inevitable sudden crossover into chaos and collapse.*

Lenin

“It is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!!”

Hegel

Karl Marx

“[Dialectic] is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary.”

“The outstanding achievement of Hegel’s Phänomenologie and of its final outcome, the dialectic of negativity as the moving and generating principle, is thus first that Hegel conceives the self-creation of man as a process, conceives objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and as transcendence of this alienation; that he thus grasps the essence of labour and comprehends objective man – true, because real man – as the outcome of man’s own labour.

Williams

“[Hegel]’s supreme merit, as far as ethics and social and political philosophy are concerned, is that the concrete universal explicates affirmative intersubjective relations and makes possible an account of social institutions that is a third alternative to abstract atomic individualism and collectivist communitarianism.” [Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition, p. 112, Williams 1997]

Andy Blunden

"[Hegel's] Doctrine of the Notion [Concept] is made up of Subject, Object and Idea. The Idea is the unity of Subject and Object, the process in which the objectification or institutionalization of the Subject continues to drive the development of the active and living subject. This development of the Subject itself, the inner development of the subject which continues within and alongside its objectification, has the form of the movement towards an all-round developed relation between individual, universal and particular."

"So what we have seen is that Hegel presented a critique of all aspects of social life by an exposition of the logic of formations of consciousness, which does not take the individual person as its unit of analysis but rather a concept. A concept is understood, not as some extramundane entity but a practical relation among people mediated by 'thought objects', i.e., artefacts."

Evald Ilyenkov

"As we know, Hegel was the first to understand the development of knowledge as a historical process subject to laws that do not depend on men's will and consciousness. He discovered the law of ascent from the abstract to the concrete as the law governing the entire course of development of knowledge."

"In reality, the immediate basis of the development of thought is not nature as such but precisely the transformation of nature by social man, that is, practice."

Dominic Tweedie

“Hegel is investigating, as a philosopher, how it is that people's minds become made up about things, both as individuals and as society, and how it is that minds are later changed again. This is how politics is done. Hegel’s work is of direct, practical interest to political people.”

“Hegel begins with “Being” – inert existence – and calls it “Nothingness”. Then he shows how something comes out of nothing.

“This is not only an original generation, but it is a repetitive generation, that becomes more elaborate. Engels shows how human beings make something out of nothing every day, and that this is the defining characteristic of human beings.”

Inter-subjectivity means the collective, free-willing human subject.

When the business of the humans is the building of the collective human subject and the generation of life on a daily basis, then we have humanism.

Humanism means that the collective human subject creates itself by a sequence of observation, thought, decision and action. The vocation of humans is to be human. Being human is not possible without individual and collective free will.

Hence freedom is the good that contains all other goods.
